

Remarks at the Public Presentation by

Bjørn Lomborg

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Good evening, friends and colleagues. I take special pleasure in welcoming you to IDRC for what I know will prove to be a lively and instructive conversation.

It is my honour to introduce our distinguished guest, Bjørn Lomborg. Professor Lomborg will be known to many of you as the author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, a volume that has excited intense and lasting controversy since its publication by Cambridge University Press in 2001.

In *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, Bjørn Lomborg deployed battalions of statistics and argument against many of the comfortably settled assumptions of our time. We are not running out of energy or natural resources, he said. We are producing—and will continue to produce—more food per person in the global population, not less. Earth's air and water are growing less polluted, not more. And acid rain does not kill our forests.

As for global warming: It is almost certainly taking place, our guest has argued. But he finds the measures usually prescribed to constrain climate change much more harmful than climate change itself.

Needless to say, these views have disturbed more than a few authorities in the disciplines challenged by *The Skeptical Environmentalist*.

So it is not entirely surprising that our guest has aroused still more contention with his latest enterprise, the Copenhagen Consensus.

On leave from his position at Denmark's University of Aarhus, where he teaches statistics in the political science department, Professor Lomborg assembled a panel of eight well-known economists (three of them Nobel laureates) to consider some of the great global issues now confronting us all—questions including civil war and communicable diseases, climate change and financial shocks, hunger, migration, trade reform and sanitation.

And again, the panel's judgments were nothing if not controversial. Applying a cost-benefit approach to some 30 policy proposals offered by invited experts, the Copenhagen Consensus concluded by ranking 17 of them in order of desirability. Control of HIV-

AIDS comes first on the Copenhagen Consensus list. Dealing with climate change ranks last.

Even *The Economist* magazine—a supportive collaborator in the Copenhagen Consensus—remarked on “the somewhat hubristic character of the undertaking”: After all, who did these economists think they were? More to the point, vigorous exceptions have been taken to the methodology attempted by the Copenhagen Consensus, to the values that might be embedded in its choices, and to the substantive conclusions it reached.

What cannot be denied is that Bjørn Lomborg, a genuine intellectual *engagé*, has reawakened debate on critical questions for policy and research. He has inconvenienced conventional wisdom. And he has animated new interest in urgent social problems.

I thank you for those contributions, Professor Lomborg, and I thank you for joining us here in Ottawa. Please accept our welcome.